

Slovak people is, “Thank you for doing what you’re doing. Thank you for your courage. And freedom is a beautiful thing, and you’re showing it right here.”

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President.
The President. God bless. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:57 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Mikulas Dzurinda of Slovakia; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; and President Vladimir Putin of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Russian ITAR-TASS February 18, 2005

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for this, again, unique opportunity to talk with you.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Q. You first time met with President Putin in Slovenia, and now in Slovakia is going to be—[laughter]—your 12th meeting. What kind—do you think we need now? Do we need a fresh start? And what do you expect for this meeting?

The President. You know, it’s interesting. First of all, we don’t need a fresh start in my personal relationship with Vladimir Putin. We’re friends, and that’s important. It’s important so that we can—he and I can have good talks, and we can understand each other and understand the decisionmaking process.

Vladimir makes a lot of decisions. And I make a lot of decisions. And I like to talk about—him about, “Well, why did you do this?” or “Why did you do that?” And I suspect he likes to ask me the same questions.

Secondly, we’ve got the framework for a good strategic relationship, which is important. I think this relationship can be invigorated. The campaign came, and in American public life, I mean—whether it be foreign policy or domestic policy, often you kind of shut down when the campaign comes. People weren’t really sure who was going to be the next President for a while. It turned out to be me, thankfully. But—and so this is a chance to reinvigorate. I wouldn’t say fresh—

fresh start is okay. I’d call it reinvigorate. We’ve got the framework, and it gives us a chance to move it forward. There’s a lot we need to do, a lot we need to work together on.

60th Anniversary of V-E Day

Q. V-Day in Moscow—in May—

The President. Yes.

Q. —60 years ago, World War II was ended. Your father was a pilot, was a hero of Second War.

The President. Yes.

Q. What—the best—the people who can—to those who won the war. What can you say to the patriots? You are invited to Moscow for the—

The President. I’m coming. Oh, yes, I want to make sure everybody understands I’m coming. My answer is, is that, thank you for your sacrifice. The Russian veterans—the people of Russia went through an unbelievable period of time of sacrifice. The stories of courage and bravery against the onslaught of the Nazis was really fantastic. I mean, it was a great lesson for bravery.

And same in our country—they call it the “Greatest Generation”; that’s what they call the World War II people because they sacrificed. And it still—this world still requires sacrifice in different ways. But there’s still needed sacrifice to make sure there’s peace. And I’m looking forward to the celebrations.

Q. The wartime alliance, do you have lessons for us now? We have again the common enemy.

The President. Yes. No, we do. And that’s another thing Vladimir and I will talk about. He sees clearly the common enemy. He’s a—and he knows you got to be tough to—and resolute and strong. And we will talk about that common enemy that is still active. The enemy—there’s a set of beliefs they believe in, and I believe the best way to defeat those beliefs is by spreading freedom and democracy. Free societies don’t like to fight. Free societies spend more time listening to their people and the demands of their people as opposed to being able to fight and spread—in this case fighting an ideology that is an ideology of hatred as this—as your good country full—fully understands.

Russia-U.S. Relations

Q. American-Russian relationship—what was the biggest success during your first term? And what are your plans for next 4 years?

The President. I appreciate that. Look, I think the biggest success would be twofold: one, an understanding of the war—the world we live in and the war on terror. Now, the enemy hit us, and they hit Russia. They hit us in a gruesome way, and they hit Russia in a gruesome way—Beslan, these movie theaters. I mean, there are all kinds of terrible events that have taken place. And so there's a common understanding that we need to work together on the war on terror. And that's important.

The other thing was the Moscow Treaty. We kind of recognized that an era has gone by, that we're reducing our nuclear stockpiles. And that's important too.

Ahead, there's a lot of things we can do. We can work on proliferation. We can work on—on disease and hunger. We can work on Iran to make sure the Iranians don't have a nuclear weapon. We continue to work on Korea. We continue to work for Middle Eastern peace. And the roadmap is an opportunity for the United States and Russia to cooperate to convince Israel and the Palestinians to do what's necessary to achieve peace. And so there's a lot we can do. And I'm looking forward to seeing my friend Vladimir Putin.

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Yes, sir.

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 11:06 a.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on Signing the Class Action Fairness Act of 2005

February 18, 2005

Thank you all. Thanks for coming. Please be seated. Thank you for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. Welcome to the people's

house. Glad you're here for the first bill signing ceremony of 2005.

The bill I'm about to sign is a model of effective, bipartisan legislation. By working together over several years, we have agreed on a practical way to begin restoring common sense and balance to America's legal system. The Class Action Fairness Act of 2005 marks a critical step toward ending the lawsuit culture in our country. The bill will ease the needless burden of litigation on every American worker, business, and family. By beginning the important work of legal reform, we are meeting our duty to solve problems now and not to pass them on to future generations.

I appreciate so very much the leadership that Senator Frist and Senator McConnell have shown on this bill in the United States Senate. I want to thank Senator Chris Dodd and Senator Tom Carper and Senator Craig Thomas as well for working in a bipartisan fashion to get this good bill to my desk.

I appreciate Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner as well as Congressman Lamar Smith joining us today. I particularly want to pay tribute to the bill sponsors, Senator Grassley and Senator Kohl as well as Congressman Bob Goodlatte and Congressman Rick Boucher, who are with us here today.

Congress showed what is possible when we set aside partisan differences and focus on what's doing right for Congress, and you all are to be—I mean, for the country—and you're to be credited for your good work. Thank you very much.

I welcome our new Attorney General—oh, right there. *[Laughter]* How quickly they forget in Washington. *[Laughter]* Al Gonzales—proud you're up here, Al. Hector Barreto of the SBA. Thank you, all the business leaders, community leaders, consumer groups who care about this issue. Thanks for your hard work. Thanks for being patient. Thanks for not becoming discouraged. And thanks for witnessing the fruits of your labor as I sign this bill.

Class actions can serve a valuable purpose in our legal system. They allow numerous victims of the same wrongdoing to merge their claims into a single lawsuit. When used properly, class actions make the legal system more